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ABSTRACT

Contents of this booklet include the following chapters: (1) Dutch New York: urbane, but not tolerant; (2) How and why Africans came to New York; (3) The largest slave population north of the plantations; (4) Defining the relationship: restrictive legislation; (5) White attitudes toward the black minority: rationale for discrimination; (6) White attitudes toward the black minority: fear; (7) The slave's response to his condition; (8) The influence of the American Revolution; and, (9) The conservative reaction. A list of suggested follow-up readings is also included. (JM)

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THE BLACK MINORITY IN EARLY NEW YORK

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
	Foreword	v
I.	Dutch New York: Urbane, But Not Tolerant	1
II.	How and Why Africans Came to New York	3
III.	The Largest Slave Population North of the Plantations	8
IV.	Defining the Relationship: Restrictive Legislation	11
V.	White Attitudes Toward the Black Minority: Rationale for Discrimination	18
VI.	White Attitudes Toward the Black Minority: Fear	24
VII.	The Slave's Response to His Condition	30
VIII.	The Influence of the American Revolution	38
IX.	The Conservative Reaction	43
	For Further Reading	45

S 3

FOREWORD

ALL AMERICANS HAVE a common heritage just as they have a common citizenship. Unfortunately that heritage — the fundamental meaning of America in historical terms — is complex. Neither students nor statesmen can grasp it quickly or express it in a simple slogan that everyone will appreciate at once. They have tried — and so have teachers — and they will try again. But the subject is too large to be taken in at a glance. It needs to be walked around and through, to be explored by minds willing to consider more than one view. It requires mental exercise, though like proper physical exercise it is also good for the heart.

The story told in the following pages offers only one part of that exercise in exploring the past that has become part of today's America. It is published now because it is an important story rarely understood. While it deals with only one state, it is our state, and while it focuses on the experiences of the black minority, it is written not just about blacks or for blacks. There is an obvious symbol of the connections between the races in these pages, and that is the page of print itself. The black print carries the story and holds the attention, but it is everywhere surrounded by white paper, whether thinly between the letters and lines or heavily around the margins. Like all symbols, this one only suggests the real thing. The point is that the presence of the whites is what makes the blacks in the story a minority, and it is the black *minority* experience that is described. There is a black majority history as well, but it is part of African, not New York history.

A biracial history such as this cannot very well have a perfectly qualified author if he must qualify as a full-fledged member of both races. Since this is impossible, we have sought and found an author whose qualifications are merely rare. David Kobrin is white; he has previously made a close study of another minority group — the 18th century Quakers — and more recently he has done advanced study in the psychology of individual-group tensions. Finally and most important, Dr. Kobrin is a scholar. He has not tried to impress readers of the present booklet with the usual footnotes and debates of a scholar, but he has done his homework and offers its results.

This, we assume, is what readers want here. Debates among scholars are not ended, but can be carried on elsewhere.

For their many constructive criticisms of the manuscript during its preparation, appreciative acknowledgment is due to Professor James Morton Smith, then of Cornell University and now director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, to Mrs. Ora Curry, Wilbur Nordos, and others of the New York State Education Department.

Other segments of New York's black history equally deserve attention, and other approaches are possible. As funds and talent permit, the Office of State History will undertake additional publications in this field. Meanwhile, suggestions and criticisms from readers are welcome.

THOMAS E. FELT

I

DUTCH NEW YORK: URBANE, BUT NOT TOLERANT

THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS in what is now New York State were established by the Dutch, not the English. They called their colony New Netherland, and their principal port city and capital, New Amsterdam. Yet in the 40 years until the British conquered New Netherland and introduced the name of New York in 1664, the port city had seen some remarkable changes. It had become a complex and cosmopolitan community. In part this was due to the influence of the Dutch West India Company. With their worldwide interests and connections, the company's directors were primarily concerned with making sure that the investors in Holland received their annual dividend. The company displayed little interest in establishing a permanent community of Dutch families in the New World. What it wanted was not so much a colony as a strategically located trading outpost.

Almost from the beginning Manhattan was a bustling seaport, maintaining close ties with the civilized world of Western Europe, and attracting to its shores the variety of people with whom the Dutch traded. By the time the English took over in 1664, the colony contained large numbers of French, English, Swedish, and Finnish peoples in addition to the approximately two-thirds of the population who were Dutch. The first Africans had arrived as early as 1626 (although, of course, not voluntarily); and the arrival of Spanish Jews from Brazil in 1654 represented the first Jewish settlement in what was to become the United States of America. Even the small community clustered around the fort at Albany, stranded 160 miles up the Hudson River from Manhattan, was saved from the isolation which was the fate of so many other frontier outposts because of the commercial orientation of the Dutch colony. Albany's position as middleman in the ever-expanding fur trade kept it in fairly frequent contact with Europeans and with traders from Manhattan.

Although Manhattan remained but a village in terms of population and congestion, it took on the urbane and sophisticated character of a European port. Those who came turned not to farming or to skilled trades — the occupations essential for the creation of a settled community — but were lured into the world of Atlantic trade by the company's policy and the chance for huge profits. The commercial development of New Netherland gave the colony a cosmopolitan and somewhat secular outlook. To be urbane and educated, however, did not mean to be tolerant and unprejudiced. On the contrary, the maintenance of ties with the larger European community insured that the provincials in New York would reflect the intolerance and biases of the world in which they traded. Almost without exception, in the early 17th century western European countries were suspicious of "foreigners" and "strangers," and were unwilling to allow different religious groups the right to worship as they pleased, even when they committed no overt acts to disturb the peace. The population of New Netherland was composed of a variety of peoples including blacks and Jews, but the existence of an ethnically diverse population did not result in a melting-pot society out of which was created a new American, child of many lands. What actually happened was that the presence of a visibly different minority provided the opportunity for the majority to institutionalize their attitudes toward Negroes by enacting restrictive legislation; and to act out their prejudice through a more informal system of subjection and repression. In the colonial period, New York was a cosmopolitan, heterogeneous, enterprising, bustling — but intolerant community.

II

HOW AND WHY AFRICANS CAME TO NEW YORK

WHEN THE DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY established New Netherland as a trading post in 1626, it was not particularly anxious to encourage the importation of slaves, but it soon turned to slavery as a means of solving a labor problem common to all land-rich colonies. The first crisis was the shortage of farm laborers to work the fertile lands of the Hudson River Valley. Most of the immigrants who were attracted to the colony were more interested in becoming prosperous merchants than agricultural laborers. To deal with the labor shortage, the company developed two programs. It established a system of patroons, whereby wealthy individuals (like Kiliaen Van Rensselaer) were granted large parcels of land and semifeudal rights in return for taking over the costs and trouble of attracting acceptable settlers. With the exception of Van Rensselaer, however, none of the patroons was successfully established.

A second solution to the company sponsored — concurrently with the patroon system — was the importation of African slaves into New Netherland. The first " parcels " of company-imported slaves arrived in 1626, even before the establishment of the patroon system. They were put to work as agricultural laborers on company farms, and on the construction of public buildings and military works for which free workers could not be obtained. The company intended to monopolize the slave trade in New Netherland, and throughout the Dutch period it did remain both the largest importer and the largest owner of slaves in the colony. But pressure from individual settlers and the importation of an increasing number of slaves admitted illegally forced the company to open the trade to all in 1648.

The company's plans concerning the slave trade were thwarted in still another way, for the colonial settlers in New Netherland discovered that the Negroes shipped directly from their homes in Africa by the company were unused to their loss of freedom and were not yet familiar with the regimen of enforced labor. Since these Africans

were often unwilling to work hard and sometimes proved extremely difficult to discipline, owners preferred to purchase slaves who had been brought first to the Dutch colony of Curaçao in the West Indies for what was called " seasoning " before being sent on to the mainland settlements. The brutal plantation experience at Curaçao broke the Africans' will to resist, introduced them to their new culture, and provided them with some experience of what was expected of Negro slaves by white masters. The consequence was a high physical toll and a harrowing experience for the blacks, but a more docile and obedient slave for the master.

Even after 1640, when free white labor was more readily available than earlier, most settlers still preferred slave labor. Despite shortages of slaves — after 1640 the demand for " seasoned " slaves in the colony was greater than the supply available — and the consequent rise in prices, slavery remained the most economical source of labor in New York. A historian recently estimated that during this period it was possible to buy a seasoned slave from the West Indies for approximately the same amount it would cost to employ a free wage worker for 1 year! Slavery had begun in New Netherland as a solution to an acute economic difficulty; it continued during the Dutch period because it provided what seemed to the majority a viable solution to the problem of furnishing the stable labor force which the colony needed for continued growth.

While there are no exact statistics, there are indications that by the close of the Dutch period Negro slaves constituted a surprisingly large proportion of the colony's population — perhaps as high as 10 percent. The first slave cargo in 1626 consisted of only 11 Negroes, but during the 1640's and 1650's when the demand for slaves in New York was greater than the number of blacks available, slave shipments were apt to be quite large, some even numbering in the hundreds. The *Gideon*, for example, a Dutch West India Company ship which arrived in 1664, landed a cargo of 300 slaves. But such shipments were highly unusual — the *Gideon's* slave cargo alone represented about 3 percent of the infant colony's population. Furthermore, some slaves who were imported into New Netherland were there only long enough to be traded south to the burgeoning tobacco plantations in Virginia and Maryland. Because records on Negro birth rates and the importation of slaves are scanty and inaccurate — before 1785 the census takers in New York did not distinguish between free Negroes and slaves — no one knows for sure how many slaves there were in New Netherland at the close of the Dutch period. The best informed guesses place the number at about 700 Negroes in a total population of seven or eight thousand.

The number of slaves in the colony increased dramatically in the decades following the English conquest of New Netherland (1664), in large part because of the personal influence of the Duke of York, the new proprietor of the colony. Charles II, restored to the throne of England only 4 years earlier, gave the province to his brother, James, Duke of York (who became King of England in 1685), as his personal property. As proprietor, the Duke of York gained more than the privilege of renaming the colony in his own honor; he also acquired the power to direct its economic development in a manner which was profitable to himself (and to several of his best friends in England). The Duke of York was one of the leading officials of the English Royal African Company which dealt exclusively in the African slave trade. It occurred to him that increasing the use of slaves in New York would mean greater profit for him and his friends.

Putting his plan into force, the Duke of York promoted the slave trade through special legislation, and by instructions to his governor and councilmen to grant priorities to slavers for docking and " warehouse " facilities. The scheme worked. Thus one byproduct of the English conquest of New York was a substantial increase in the number of Negroes imported into the colony as slaves.

Although the original impetus for treating Negroes as an article of commerce came from the private schemes of the Duke of York, a large slave trade could only be sustained over a period of years by the local demand for slaves. One colonial official estimated that the annual demand for slaves in New York was near the one thousand mark. Because the venture proved so profitable, neither the Duke of York nor the Royal African Company was able to maintain an effective monopoly. Gradually, commerce in humans came more and more under the control of independent New York businessmen. The Royal African Company suffered in its competition with individual entrepreneurs because New Yorkers continued to prefer West Indian slaves (now " seasoned " in the English islands of Barbados and Jamaica), already acculturated and sometimes semiskilled, to Negroes imported directly from Africa. During most of the first half of the 18th century there was a 100 percent markup on retailed slaves; convenient weekly auctions were established in which both black slaves and white indentured servants (serving under contract for a stipulated period of years) were auctioned off. Unlike the situation in the ante bellum South, apparently no social stigma was attached to being a slave trader in colonial New York; it was considered another business venture open to men with capital to invest, perhaps if anything more likely to produce quick profits.

Before the American Revolution, the New York slave trade began a steady decline, which was due almost entirely to factors extraneous to New York events (with the exception of the Revolution), and beyond the control of merchants and buyers in the province. After the Spanish government no longer permitted English traders to sell their slaves in Spanish possessions in the New World, they attempted to " dump " their cargoes in the English mainland market, including New York, severely depressing market prices. During the Revolution, interference with foreign commerce by both sides, coupled with the depletion of the supply of slaves on the coast of West Africa, raised the price of slaves to a level which was prohibitive for New Yorkers (but not for West Indian planters). The *coup de grace* was provided by the ideology of the Declaration of Independence; the antislavery forces in America proved to be most effective and most successful in bringing about the legal prohibition of the slave trade in New York and other northern colonies.

Above is a detail of the print shown on the opposite page. Dating from around 1642, it is the first known artist's representation of New Amsterdam. Reproduced by courtesy of the Prints Division, New York Public Library, New York.

Cum Privilegio Ordinum Hollandiæ et Westfrisiæ
U AMSTERD

III

THE LARGEST SLAVE POPULATION NORTH OF THE PLANTATIONS

DURING THE CENTURY IN WHICH the slave traders remained active and the port of New York was one of the principal depots for black slaves, the colony took in (and kept) Negroes at such a rate that by the middle of the 18th century there were more slaves in New York — both in terms of absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population — than in any colony north of Maryland. In the first half of the 18th century, when the slave trade was at its height, slaves increased at a faster rate than the white population. Throughout the colonial period, slaves greatly outnumbered white servants in the colony. Due to a combination of circumstances, some historical, some almost accidental, some purely economic, and some (as we shall see) less easily defined, New York came to have the largest slave population among the nonplantation English colonies in the New World.

At the beginning of the 18th century, more than 11 percent of the colony's population was Negro. By 1723 (according to a census completed in that year), the figure had risen to almost 15 percent; and it stayed above 14 percent until at least 1756. Despite the expansion of the white population, in the 1770's New York's Negro minority accounted for more than 11 percent of the colony's total population. Such percentages, greater than comparable figures at any other period of New York's history, made the Negro the single largest minority in colonial New York.

Year	*Total Pop.*	*Negroes*	*% of Total*
1689	18,067	2,170	12
1703	20,665	2,466	11.5
1723	40,665	6,171	15.2
1731	50,286	7,231	14.3
1737	60,437	9,021	14.7
1746	61,589	9,107	14.7

1749	74,348	10,592	14.4
1756	96,790	13,542	13.9
1771	168,007	19,873	11.8

The decline in the percentage of Negroes in the New York population in the years immediately before the American Revolution does not indicate a decrease in the actual number of blacks in the province. Rather, it reflects the phenomenal growth of the white population: During the 15 years from 1756 to 1771 the increase of the white population was almost as large as during the 67 years from 1689 to 1756.

Until nearly the close of the colonial period, Negroes were concentrated mostly in New York City and the surrounding counties of Kings, Queens, and Richmond. In 1703, over 70 percent of all blacks in the province lived in these downstate counties; in the 1750's the figure still remained above 60 percent. Most of the white inhabitants who were economically able to support slaves and who could employ them profitably were found in these areas. Expansion north and west was delayed by the power of the Iroquois, and by the danger of attack by the French. In addition, since New York City served as the center for the slave trade, it was easier for downstate whites to obtain Africans. At the mid-century point, Negroes represented just over 14 percent of the population of the colony as a whole. The comparable figure in New York County was 18 percent; in Kings County, 34 percent; in Queens, 16 percent; and in Richmond, 19 percent. It was not until the white population in the counties of the upper Hudson Valley increased sharply in the 1760's and 1770's that there was a corresponding growth in the number of upstate slaves.

In the New York province, slaves were used as agricultural laborers on farms, as servants in houses, in manufacturing, in commerce, and in a variety of skilled and semiskilled occupations. A majority of the unskilled and menial laborers in the colony were probably Negroes. But in New York City in particular, owners often employed slaves in various urban occupations and trades which required a considerable degree of skill (and consequently, permitted considerable independence). Slaves in the city carried out competently such skilled crafts as goldsmith, carpenter, blacksmith, weaver, shoemaker, and butcher. To some degree slave labor in New York was in competition with free labor; but perhaps because of the absence of a large white labor force, there was little organized opposition.

The use of Negro slaves in the province was vastly broadened by the widespread practice of hiring out slaves to nonslaveowners who needed their particular skill. In New York, the hiring-out system was probably more widespread and better organized than in any

other English colony. Individuals who were in need of part-time labor could hire Negroes from their owner by the day, month, or year. In the city, skilled slave labor was able to compete effectively with the free labor of white artisans. The temporary use of slaves was even more advantageous to small farmers who needed help only during brief periods. Through hiring they could obtain extra hands for harvest, for example, without having to pay upkeep and food during the winter months when there would be little for the slaves to do.

During the colonial period, New York's slave population was probably more widely diffused among the white population than in any other English colony. Although some masters owned bands of over 30 slaves, in the closing years of the colonial period few individuals owned more than 10 slaves, and the average master had between one and three slaves in his household. Only the handful of individuals who owned more than 10 or 20 Negroes could imitate the odious arrangements of the Southern colonies where the blacks were sometimes treated more like objects than people. In New York — unlike the tobacco and rice plantations of the Chesapeake and Carolina societies — the Negroes did not usually work in large gangs at simple, repetitive tasks under the eyes of hired overseers. On the contrary, either in the city or on the farm, the New York Negro was likely to live in his master's household and to work alongside him in the fields or at his place of business. He was still a slave, of course, but such proximity permitted, even encouraged, a personal relationship between black slave and white master which was not likely on the large plantation.

IV

DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP: RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION

DESPITE THE FACT THAT slavery existed in New Netherland, there was apparently a lack of tension between the two groups, black and white, which allowed the system to operate effectively with a minimum of formality. In the New World English colonies, the social and legal position of the slave was always codified locally through legislation. Under the Dutch, however, the arrangement was more informal. The relatively small number of slaves and the working conditions for Negroes in New Netherland gave the Dutch no incentive to develop the type of slave code common to every southern colony (as well as New York) in the 18th century. Because there was no express legal sanction for slavery, of course, does not mean that the institution did not exist. What it does indicate is that during the Dutch period Negroes — both slave and free — were able to fit more easily into the general structure of white society than they could under the English. An English captain who had been taken prisoner in New Netherland recalled later that " their blacks . . . were very free and familiar; sometimes sauntering about among the whites at meal time, with hat on head, and freely joining occasionally in conversation, as if they were one and all of the same household." Although the Negroes' color alone was accepted as an indication of slave status (i.e., free black men if challenged, had the responsibility to demonstrate that they were free), Negroes were not isolated from the larger community to the extent that they were during the 18th century.

Since slavery was not formally defined, Negroes who were slaves were never slaves in the absolute legal sense that the term came to mean under the English; slavery was not always for life, nor was it necessarily inherited. Distinctions between a slave and an indentured servant — a person who signed a contract to serve a given number of years, usually four to seven, in return for passage to the New World

— were not clearly enumerated in New Netherland law. Consequently, the distinction between a " slave " and a " servant " became somewhat blurred. Like servants, slaves could gain absolute freedom after a period of years, rather than having to serve in perpetuity; their color in itself did not preclude the possibility of manumission under the Dutch or the English. It was not uncommon for freedom to be held out as a reward in return for good service, and most whites would carry through with their promise (even though not legally binding in all cases) if the slave-servant performed to the master's satisfaction. Apparently the Dutch had no fear of increasing the class of free Negroes within their community; there were no statutes which prohibited, or even hindered, private manumission.

A common arrangement by which Negro slaves gained a measure of freedom (which was inconsistent with their theoretical status as slaves) was known as " half-freedom." Under this plan, the owner could grant liberty to a slave in return for a stipulated amount of work every year, or for an annual payment of goods, or, sometimes, for both. The benefit to the owner who required part-time servants, or who had a seasonal demand for laborers, was obvious. It assured " free " labor when needed, while at the same time freeing the former owner from the responsibility and expense of caring for workers at other times. Because it made optimum use of slave labor, the profit-conscious Dutch West India Company probably made greatest use of the half-freedom system. The company required slaves under half-freedom to contribute their labor for the construction of public buildings or defense establishments, but when the Negro was not working, the company had neither the responsibility to support him nor the need to set him to work inefficiently and uneconomically at make-shift tasks. Even though half-freedom could not be inherited, as a legal anomaly in the institution of slavery, it provided a welcome way station (while it existed) between true freedom and the absolute degradation of total racial slavery.

The halfway status of Negroes under the Dutch, between slavery and full participation in the life of the community, is revealed even more obviously in the numerous ways in which Negroes — both slave and free — were accorded equal treatment with whites under the law. Blacks, for instance, were allowed to own land; many, in fact, did own freeholds. Slaves had basically the same status in the courts of justice as did other members of the community; their testimony (unlike under the English) was permitted in cases involving whites as well as Negroes. Negroes were members of the militia and, in time of trouble or external threat, were counted on as aid in de-

fense. Many of New York City's blacks were armed during the Indian war of 1641–44 and the Dutch sometimes used Negro slaves in order to track down fugitive Indians who had committed crimes in the white community. Most striking of all, in comparison with the situation under the English in the following century, intermarriage was both a legal and a practical possibility. Furthermore, in New Netherland there actually were free blacks who owned white indentured servants — a contradiction in terms under a system of *racial* suppression.

Despite all this, slavery did exist in New Netherland, and those Negroes who were slaves were, after all, slaves. What is so striking is the comparison of the pattern of informal distinctions under the Dutch with the situation as it gradually evolved under English rule. In the first years after 1664, while there were still comparatively few slaves, the responsibility for regulation rested primarily with the owner, and not with the government. Until 1682, slaves continued to be considered legally as servants (for life) who were persons before the law, rather than as chattel property. In that year, however, New York enacted legislation which recognized the slave as a category distinct from the indentured servant (not serving in perpetuity), and passed regulations which applied only to the black community. The movement to control the life of the Negro through legislation had begun. It did not end until New York had enacted a " slave code " which was the most complete and the most severe of all the colonies north of Maryland.

In the latter decades of the 17th century, additional proscriptive legislation was enacted, but the major law was the 1702 " Act for Regulating Slaves " which enumerated specific restrictions, and made it definite that in New York there would be a separate judicial standard for Negroes. Spurred on by panic after the slave insurrection of 1712, and then again by fear of a new slave plot in 1730, the New York code — which was to remain in force for the rest of the 18th century — was completed by the mid-1730's. Major revisions did not come until the post-revolutionary period, and then they were part of an effort to liberalize abuses and ameliorate the Negro's condition during the decades of impending emancipation.

The comparative harshness of the slave code in the colony was a reflection of the fact that New York's slave population was the largest in the north. The slave code revealed the white majority's recognition that the master-slave relationship was a power relationship, requiring legal controls. The existence of a suppressed black minority was a fearsome reality for white New Yorkers in the 18th century. It is also true that such legislation would not have been possible if

most white New Yorkers did not believe that Negroes were a separate type of human being who had to be legally distinguished and set off from the white community. In retrospect, it also seems as if the situation under the Dutch set the stage for an elaborate slave code by its very laxity. The comparatively small scale on which slavery existed in New Netherland, the informality between master and slave, and the lack of a specific definition of slave status became problems as the slave population increased under the English. The English response was formal proscription: local and provincial legislation.

The New York body of legislation for slaves had more in common with the 18th century slave codes in the southern colonies than with regulations enacted by New York's northern neighbors. But since New York's slave population was not as large as those of southern colonies like Virginia and South Carolina, her legal restrictions were not as severe. No slave patrol system existed in New York, for example, and, unlike in the South, there was no prohibition against teaching slaves to read and write. There were local variations, of course, to suit unique circumstances; the concentration of slaves in New York City produced tighter restrictions than elsewhere in the province. But throughout the colony, enforcement of the code was generally more lenient than the full potential of the laws permitted. Because the slave code dealt in detail with virtually all aspects of daily life, it was never possible to enforce it strictly and completely in practice. In New York City, for instance, where a large number of the slaves were skilled artisans who were not kept under constant supervision (as they would have been on a large plantation), " illegal " social visiting was possible for city Negroes.

On the other hand, regulations aimed specifically at slaves and no one else were bound to be harsher than those designed to maintain order in the community as a whole. With neither property nor freedom to forfeit, all that was left to be taken was life or limb; punishment usually had to include physical pain or hardship. Whipping, branding with a hot iron, hanging, and jail terms (although the latter two " punished " the master as well as the slave if no compensation was provided) were the most common punishments for infractions by slaves. Many of the larger communities employed a " Negro whipper " on a permanent basis; long after the Puritan settlements to the north had discarded it, several communities in New York retained the inhumane Biblical injunction of 39 lashes. The most extreme punishments were reserved for what the white community considered the most grievous slave crimes: crimes directed against whites, or against the institution of slavery itself. Slave rebellions and attacks on whites were never treated with leniency. On the contrary,

leaders in the colony believed that public execution and torture of the culprits would serve as a deterrent to other slaves — who were forced to attend the ceremonies. Slaves were burned at the stake and broken on the wheel in 18th century New York.

Under the legal system established in the 18th century, Negro slaves were considered to be more than just chattels. Despite their status as property, Negroes also had some legal recognition as human beings. Although the slaveowner had the legal right to punish his slave at his discretion, for instance, and usually did if it were a private matter such as theft from the family treasure, the code was intended to protect the slave from cruel abuse or tyrannical treatment. Owners were prohibited from carrying out punishments which could harm the slave or cause his death. Laws were passed by the provincial legislature to insure that slaves were provided with an " adequate " amount of food and clothing. And perhaps most striking, masters were held legally responsible for the care and support of aged and infirm slaves. (Such legislation, of course, reveals that white owners tried to avoid the responsibility of maintaining slaves who no longer could pay their way.) New York law prohibited slaves from begging for food — one means by which masters could throw the support of the slave on the community — and owners were specifically prohibited from getting rid of old slaves by " selling " them to those who obviously were unable to support them. A 1706 statute encouraged the baptism of Negroes, a clear indication that whites believed the Negro to be a person who possessed an eternal soul.

On the other hand, slaves in New York were also legally considered to be property. Slaves were taxed as property, they could be bequeathed and inherited, and they could, of course, be bought and sold. In theory, if not in practice, slaves could not legally be married, or hold or transmit property (with the single exception of land given to slaves as a reward for service during the American Revolution). Despite the laws, there were sporadic cases of masters bequeathing land to slaves, and of church marriages of slaves. Slaves could not testify either for or against a freeman, white or black, although in the trial of a slave the evidence of another slave was admissable.

The legal distinction drawn between whites and Negroes by the majority of white New Yorkers is most obviously revealed in the different standards of justice established for Negroes. The very fact that a judicial procedure existed for slaves acted as a safeguard against personal caprice and vindictiveness; but it should also be pointed out that the judicial procedure created for slaves in New York omitted many of the safeguards traditionally granted to peoples throughout the English world. In addition to those crimes which

carried the death penalty for white as well as black (and there were many more of them in the 18th century than there are today) certain transgressions were capital crimes when committed by a Negro but not when committed by a white man. These included murder or attempted murder of a (black) freeman *or* slave, and, after the insurrection of 1712 in which blacks drew unsuspecting whites to their death by setting fire to an outbuilding, burning a dwelling, barn, stable, outbuilding, or stalks of corn or hay.

Crimes against slaves were less severely punished than those against whites in other cases besides murder. The rape of a free woman was a capital offense, but not the rape of a slave. In fact, the law appears to have ignored the possibility that a slave woman could be raped.

The lack of equality for Negroes under the judicial system extended to the trial situation. If suspected of a capital offense, the slave would be brought before the justice of the peace for a preliminary examination. Depending upon the results of that interview, he could be jailed on suspicion. His trial would normally be without a jury — unless his master intervened, requested a jury, and was willing to pay the nominal expense. In any event, the slave could never challenge the jury when there was one, nor the justices and five freeholders who in normal circumstances constituted his judges. Conviction for a capital offense meant the mandatory death sentence, the manner to be determined by the chief justice.

Such a judicial system was fairly easily influenced by personal preconceptions, outside pressures, and even simply mistaken or inaccurate information. That in practice it was possible for slaves to be falsely accused and summarily executed is tragically clear from the incidents surrounding the supposed slave insurrection of 1741. The court was more scrupulous with the property rights of the owner than it often was with the personal rights of the slave. Since the Negro was considered to be property, if the slave was executed the owner would usually be compensated by a levy charged to all the slaveholders of the county involved. In cases involving larger numbers of slaves — such as the insurrection of 1712 — the owners were compensated by a special appropriation voted by the provincial assembly.

In addition to the criminal code and special judicial procedures, there existed a variety of lesser regulations prohibiting the movements and actions of slaves. In contrast to laws concerning major crimes, petty regulations were more likely to be enacted by the local community and therefore showed some variation throughout the province. Included among the regulations was a prohibition against more than four slaves assembling together, unless engaged in business for their

masters; a requirement of a " pass " for any slave traveling alone more than one mile from his " home " (any white person could pick up the violator and administer the punishment of whipping); and a prohibition against entertaining a slave in one's home without express permission from the slave's master. Slaves were also prohibited from selling goods without the consent of their owner, although in this instance the penalty was placed on the buyer and not on the transgressing slave. It was illegal for slaves to possess weapons of any sort, or even to use guns except by direction of their master and while in his presence. Punishment for such lesser crimes was usually whipping so that the services of the slave would not be lost to the master.

Such local ordinances were extremely difficult to enforce. Because of its comparatively large slave population, commercial orientation, and the mobility allowed skilled and semiskilled slaves, New York City had more trouble than any other locality in the colony with enforcing ordinances limiting slave movements and actions. Despite the regulation against selling goods, slaves from Long Island and northern New Jersey established vegetable markets in New York City where they sold produce they had acquired in sometimes legitimate but often extra-legal ways. Liquor was considered part of the severe problem of racial control in the city; some taverns catered to the Negro trade. Some attempts also were made to regulate direct competition of slaves with white workers. In 1686, for example, New York City passed an ordinance which prohibited slaves from hiring themselves out as porters. Other local ordinances in the city reflected the white majority's fear of Negro uprisings. No burials of blacks were permitted after sundown, and attendance at Negro funerals was restricted to a maximum of twelve. Lack of the right to trial by jury might endanger the life of the innocent Negro; the local ordinances, on the other hand, by annoying and degrading, tended to erode more gradually.

V

WHITE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BLACK MINORITY: RATIONALE FOR DISCRIMINATION

CERTAINLY THERE WOULD HAVE been no slavery in the New World colonies if it had not been for economic need. The demand for a permanent, nontransient labor force in an underpopulated colony helps to explain why slavery developed in New York. Similarly, if it were not for the helplessness of African peoples in the face of superior European technology and European aggressiveness (a factor often ignored), slavery could not have grown to such large proportions in New York or, for that matter, in any other English colony. But economic usefulness and sufficient power by themselves did not make slavery an inevitable development, and alone they cannot explain why slavery continued in New York into the early 19th century.

Slavery in New Netherland seems to have been primarily economically motivated and can be explained more in *purely* functional terms than can the continuation of slavery in English New York after 1664. The Dutch settlers regarded slavery as an economic expedient — as a way to solve an economic problem — rather than as a means of social organization or race control. Theories about Negro inferiority were less often enunciated, either by the inhabitants or by the Dutch West India Company, than after the English took over. One index of the New Netherlanders attitude toward black people is the lack of legal discrimination against free Negroes. In New Netherland, if a man were not a slave, even if he was black he was considered " free." Recall that free Negroes were accepted in the militia, could own freeholds and white indentured servants, could testify in courts of law, and could intermarry with whites. Slavery in New Netherland was exceptionally mild — as mild, one recent historian has noted, as such a system can possibly allow.

Slavery was continued into the 18th century not so much because of economic necessity but because of certain preconceptions, certain ideas that transplanted Englishmen held in common about black people. These ideas encouraged white New Yorkers to conclude, almost without having to think about it, that Negroes could be slaves for (transplanted) Europeans. The important question is how Africans became slaves for the English in the first place. It is simple enough to see that once Englishmen made slaves of Negroes, the Englishmen's children would grow up finding it perfectly natural that Negroes were slaves to whites. The experience in all the English colonies demonstrated that once established the cycle was self-reinforcing. Why was it that New Yorkers created a separate legal classification of " slave " for Negroes, but not, for example, for Irishmen, whom they made servants with contracts which guaranteed freedom after a certain period of years, or for Jews and Catholics, against both of whom discrimination took other forms? Blacks were not slaves for whites, after all, until white men made them slaves.

Part of the reason why the English continued slavery in New York was because of the example the Dutch set before them; slavery already existed in New Netherland when the English took it by force in 1664. The personal plans of the new proprietor, the Duke of York, also contributed to the advance of slavery in the colony. But we can see that neither of these is a satisfactory answer to our question if we consider a hypothetical case: If the Dutch had enslaved all Englishmen in New Netherland, would the English have continued the institution of English slavery when they took over the province? Of course not. That Englishmen believed it was proper to make slaves of Africans is a more important factor explaining the continuation of chattel slavery in New York than its prior existence, or economic necessity.

Attitudes, as the historian Winthrop Jordan points out, can exist on more than one level and may be expressed in a variety of ways. They may be conscious or subconscious, they may take the form of explicit rationalizations and pronouncements, they may be discovered in less clearly defined feelings and emotions, or they may be implicit in outward behavior. The attitudes of 17th and 18th century New Yorkers towards Negroes were mainly given to them by their parents and grandparents and sometimes — although much more indirectly — even by their great-grandparents. Their assumptions were modified by their own experiences, of course, but the solid core of their ideas was passed on essentially unchanged over the generations.

In the period before the settlement of the New World, the English were not familiar with " nonwhite " peoples. They knew that people

with dark skins existed, but they had little personal experience with them. Thus when Englishmen first came into contact with Negroes on the West Coast of Africa in the 16th century, what was most striking to them about the Africans was their " blackness." That the color of the natives' skin was the most striking fact of the first encounter is revealed by the English habit of calling all Africans " black," despite the variety of skin colors of Africans they met. The impression that proved longest lasting in the English mind was the feeling of difference, the contrast between Europeans' light skin and the darkness of the Africans. The first and most fundamental conclusion drawn by Englishmen about Africans was that they were different — as different as black and white.

Englishmen were particularly upset by the African's " blackness " because of an ethnocentric tendency to find everything black repulsive. The meaning of the color black for 17th century Englishmen had in almost all cases moral overtones. To them, black connotated dirt, baseness, ugliness, sexual perversion, and sin — the Devil was invariably painted as a black man. That a man, a human being, should naturally be colored black not only made that individual repulsive to Englishmen, but also posed serious questions about the Africans' origin and their status in what Englishmen believed to be a divinely ordained hierarchy of all living things. Why, indeed, they asked, did God make some men black?

The 17th century New Yorker was sure that God had not *originally* created Africans black. The Biblical narrative of creation clearly stated that all mankind was derived from a single source (white, they assumed), and in this period few Europeans, on either side of the Atlantic, doubted the authenticity of the Biblical account. The question of the cause of the African's skin color, then, had to be phrased in terms of what had happened to make some previously white men black. A natural explanation was suggested: the heat of the sun in the African climate had gradually darkened the natives' skin. But such an environmental approach was open to at least some form of testing. After several generations of experience with Africans in the more temperate climate of New York revealed no perceptible lightening of skin color — at least through climatic causes —New Yorkers could not find such arguments persuasive.

Believing that the story related in Scripture was literally true, they did find the Biblical explanation offered in Genesis 9 and 10 convincing. The story was clear enough. Ham (or Cham), Noah's son, was punished by his father for disobeying his orders and coming into his tent unannounced. But agreement upon the meaning of the passage was not so easy. Despite contrary arguments offered by

some, many colonial Englishmen accepted the explanation that the disobedience referred to had been sexual in nature, and that the punishment was the curse of blackness for Ham — and for all his seed for generations to come. Such reasoning was compelling to 17th century Englishmen because it seemed logical to them that blackness must be a curse, and that the curse must have some meaning.

Seventeenth and early eighteenth century New Yorkers — Dutch Reformed and English alike — would not consider seriously the possibility that the history recorded in the Bible was not literally true. Because in the colonial period religion and the supernatural were so real and so important to the average person, the fact that the Africans were not religious — that is, that they were not Christians — was but one more way in which Englishmen thought of Negroes as being different from themselves. The usual response on the part of Englishmen to meeting a non-Christian people was to make at least some effort at converting and Christianizing them. Africans were not the first " heathens " with whom Englishmen had had contact, but they reacted differently to the Africans' lack of an acceptable religion than they did, for example, to the " paganism " of the American Indians. The initial response of Englishmen toward Africans and the reaction of the overwhelming majority of whites in New York — and especially slaveholders — was to ignore the blacks' religious needs.

When 16th century Englishmen had first come into contact with blacks in Africa, they had analyzed the new culture in strictly European terms. Eating habits, living standards, housing, relations between people, conduct in warfare, religion, dress and appearance of the Africans all seemed unbelievably crude and barbaric — the very opposite of civilized. Colonial New Yorkers, of course, never saw the African in his native land. Yet they carried with them ideas transmitted through the generations about the character and basic nature of the Negro which stemmed from the conclusions drawn by those Englishmen who had first observed, and at best only partly understood, West African culture.

In the 18th century the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts made valiant efforts to bring Christianity to Negroes in New York. Opposition to the efforts of the S.P.G. was based in part on the fear that if a slave were baptized, he could no longer be kept enslaved, because he was now a Christian; and in part, from apprehension that the literacy taught by the missionaries would raise the slave's expectations and thus make him less manageable.

But a more fundamental obstacle to conversion efforts was the generally held belief that the Negro was not a fit subject for conver-

sion. New Yorkers did not view the Negroes' " heathenism " primarily in terms of his lack of knowledge about the Gospel, or of his failure to practice Christian ceremonies. Such outward manifestations of the African's paganism became less obvious as the 17th century became the 18th, and the New York Negro was increasingly Europeanized and " civilized." But the obstacle to Christianizing the Negro was so basic that even changes in overt behavior could not effect it materially. Christianity, so the colonial New Yorker reasoned, referred to a great deal more than mere profession of certain doctrines about Christ and the Second Coming; it implied something about the quality of man and of the civilized society he created. In these terms, many thought the Negro to be so different that he was not eligible for conversion. Because New Yorkers viewed the Negro's lack of Christianity as part of the overall pattern of the black man's defects (in terms of the white culture), they could no more conceive of the Negro being a Christian than of the leopard changing his spots — or, more to the point, of the " black " man becoming " white." But some New Yorkers clearly disagreed, for larger numbers of New York born Negroes were baptized. Nevertheless, the heritage left in 18th century New York from the original English reaction to the Negro's lack of Christianity was a deep-seated feeling that the difference between the white man and the Negro was, in effect, insurmountable.

The early English explorers also passed on to their descendants the idea that Negroes were savages, more like " beasts " than civilized men. It was a commonplace of contemporary English literature to describe blacks as bestial, or brutish, or simply beastly. Added to this image of the Negro as a beastlike man was " a strange and eventually tragic happenstance of nature " which greatly compounded the power of the original, already degrading imagery. Almost simultaneously with their discovery of dark-skinned peoples in Africa, Englishmen discovered that there also existed on the African continent an animal closer in physical appearance to human beings than any they had ever known before. The ape, or what they called the " orangoutang " (it was the chimpanzee), was frighteningly like a man in appearance.

The discovery of dark-skinned people and of an animal closely resembling man on the same continent at the same time seemed like more than mere coincidence to contemporary Englishmen. Was there not a similarity, they asked, between the manlike beasts and the beastlike men of Africa? Englishmen even claimed to see physical resemblances between the two. They pointed to the " black " color of both, the flattened nose (in comparison with Europeans), and the

thicker lips. But in fact the connection which Englishmen drew between African and ape was based more on emotional and cultural needs than on any actually close physical similarity. Englishmen described both the orangoutang and the African as " black " while neither was really black in color; they seemed black to Englishmen because of the connotations that color had for Englishmen. The skin of the chimpanzee under its hair is in fact pink, and the hairiest of racial stocks among humans is the white. But if such comparisons occurred to Englishmen, they seem to have gone unspoken.

It was worrisome to find an animal which so closely resembled human beings. It was extremely important to Englishmen that the division between man and animal remain clear and distinct. An animal was savage, beastly, with " animal " passions and an unrestrained sexual lust, not controllable (as in man) by reason and rationality. Of all men, the Negro seemed to come closest to not being a man, to crossing the line into the category of beast. Indeed, Englishmen even believed — always without factual basis — that copulation between Negro women and apes was common! Such an assertion could never be substantiated, but it had a great deal of utility. It enabled whites to imply an affinity between the so-called bestial black and the ape without going to the extent of claiming identity. The distinction between man and animal had to remain clear. The Negro was obviously a human being — but a savage, lewd, uncivilized, black creature associated more closely, on a non-verbal level, with the ape than with the white European. No difference between two peoples could be made greater! It was this sense of difference, this ingrained feeling that somehow blacks were animal-like and not fully human that was inherited by provincial New Yorkers of the colonial period. Here, indeed, we must be impressed by the weight of past experience upon the present.

The existence of such attitudes about the Negro — specifically, about his color, his heathenism, his sexual nature, and his reputed savagery and bestiality — did not mean, of course, that Englishmen would necessarily enslave Negroes whenever and wherever they came into contact with them. What it does help to explain is why they were willing to consider as acceptable for Africans a form of degradation which they would not consider for other peoples. The ideas of the white culture about black people played a crucial role in determining the manner in which the white majority treated the Negro minority in colonial New York.

VI

WHITE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BLACK MINORITY: FEAR

FEAR CONSTITUTED ONE OF THE MOST important ingredients in the mixture of white attitudes toward the Negro minority within its bounds. That there should have been considerable fear — both a personal fear of the black man as a strange being and a communal uneasiness over the danger of uprisings is not surprising. The relationship between the races was based on power maintained by force. No one in New York could fool himself into believing that slavery was voluntary. On the contrary, 18th century New Yorkers felt that Negroes shared in common with all mankind a general longing for freedom; it was left to a later generation of Americans to suggest that slaves were content in their suppressed condition. Colonial New Yorkers were convinced that no man could conceivably be satisfied while in such a totally unfree state. Whatever the feeling of the slaves themselves, the belief that the slave population was dissatisfied and fervently desired liberty nurtured white uneasiness over the presence of so many Negro slaves in their midst. No matter how secure the safeguards or how overwhelming the physical force available, the white majority could never disregard the possibility of force being used by the oppressed minority as well as by themselves.

The extent of fear of slave insurrection and violence varied throughout the colony depending upon local circumstances. In urban areas like New York City where the proportion of blacks to whites was much higher than elsewhere in the colony, fear of black violence was greater than in rural communities with comparatively fewer Negroes. The physical congestion in the city and its commercial orientation added to the possibilities for slave revolt. In Manhattan, Negroes could meet privately with comparative ease; city slaves, especially the skilled artisans, enjoyed a degree of physical freedom and lack of supervision generally unknown elsewhere in the colony. The city, in fact, did experience more in the way of slave unrest and " insolence " than

other areas of the colony, and the city council, recognizing the problem, attempted to deal with it through local restrictive ordinances.

Whatever the realities of the danger of Negro revolt in New York, historians today are certain that white fear of slave insurrection was exaggerated: The rumor of slave revolt was much more common than revolt itself. The white majority, in addition to overestimating the possibility for revolt, lived with a complex image of what a slave insurrection would be like which in many of its major details bore no relation to the actual situation. Two examples — the belief in the Negro's desire for total mastery, and the role of the free Negro in slave revolts — will illustrate the irrational nature of the white fear.

The white majority was convinced that all slaves had a natural antagonism toward white people. Perhaps such a belief was justified given the nature of the relationship between the two groups, but the white fear of vengeance represented more than simply a recognition of the feelings of those whom they oppressed. Despite the fact that none of the incidents which occurred in New York presented any evidence to support their contention, whites were sure that the goals of black rebels included the murder of white males, the enslavement of white females, and the recreation of New York as a black governed and controlled province. There is no evidence that blacks had such grandiose plans as, for example, Daniel Horsmanden attributed to them in 1741, to " set the Town on Fire, and to kill all white People. . . ." White fear so magnified the actual danger that slave revolt became in their minds not a question of individual or small group violence on the part of slaves, but a question of the possible total destruction of what the majority considered to be the proper arrangement in a civilized community. The consequence of a successful revolt, they were sure, would be the reversal of the present arrangement between the races: black over white, rather than white over black.

Free Negroes in New York almost always remained aloof from and did not participate in slave uprisings. Yet colonial New Yorkers were convinced that free Negroes not only joined their unfree brethren in acts of violence, but that they also provided the leadership for insurrection and the focal point for unrest. Why was it that whites, despite continued examples to the contrary, believed that free blacks played a major role in leading rebellions? How was it that the community could enact legislation restricting the " rights " of free Negroes? — they were denied the suffrage for example, and their right to own property was restricted.

The answer to both questions is that in the 18th century fear of Negroes led white New Yorkers to presume that the bond of color was

stronger than the bond of freedom: given the need to make a decision, free blacks would side with slaves rather than with other freemen. Since whites assumed that race identity was all important, they concluded that blacks, even " free " blacks, could not be fully trusted, at least certainly as long as slavery existed. The result was an increased tension between the races, and an increased uneasiness among the white majority about the presence of a Negro minority — slave and free -- within the white community. In the 18th century, New Yorkers came to believe that it was not possible to integrate the Negro fully into colonial society no matter what his legal status. By the close of the colonial period, New Yorkers had lived too long and in too close proximity with Negroes to swallow the stories about beastlike behavior which their great-grandparents had believed. What they still retained was the feeling that the differences between black and white people were fundamental and, at least for the present, unalterable — not because Negroes were uneducable, or still " heathens," but because they were black.

Perhaps the best measure of the white fear of the Negro minority in the community is their reaction to the so-called Slave Conspiracy of 1741. The insurrection of 1741 can be (and recently has been) compared to the more famous Salem witchcraft trials of 1690–91. It seems clear now that there was no Negro plot in 1741 to take over the city of New York. At most, there was a " conspiracy " on the part of a small group of whites and Negro slaves — led by a tavern owner who illegally served liquor to slaves — to rob the city's rich by setting a series of fires in order to distract attention from themselves during the thefts. Plotting larceny, obviously, is not the same thing as plotting rebellion. The white majority reacted to the fires and rumors of a Negro plot by panicking. A contemporary observer wrote that " many people had such terrible apprehensions upon this occasion . . . that several Negroes, who were met in the streets, after the alarm of their rising, were hurried away to Gaol." The extreme reaction can be explained in part by the especially severe winter and the threat of renewed outbreak of war in New York. It also must have been related to the provincial insecurity (common to most of the English colonies during this period) which stemmed from the rapid and uncontrolled social and economic changes within the colony. Whatever else the slave insurrection of 1741 may have been, however, it reveals the extent to which the presence of an " alien " minority affected the tenor of life and the very fabric of the social community in colonial New York.

On the night of February 28, 1741, the home of a wealthy merchant was robbed of approximately 60 pounds worth of valuables. Begin-

ning with the questioning of a sailor seen in the merchant's shop, a chain of accusations led the authorities to one of the taverns in the city which regularly served slaves. Back-fence gossip between Mary Burton, a 16-year-old girl serving her term of indenture at John Hughson's tavern, and the wife of a local constable, led to the discovery of a cache of stolen goods beneath Hughson's tavern. Hughson, his wife and daughter, and a prostitute-lodger known as " Peggy Kerry, the Irish beauty," were all arrested on charges of burglary and receiving stolen goods from slaves.

While the investigation into the robbery continued, a series of mysterious fires occurred throughout the city. Two weeks after the original theft, Fort George burned to the ground in a fire which, at the time, was attributed to the carelessness of a plumber who was using live coals. Two more fires occurred in the city in the next 2 weeks, and then, on the weekend of April 4–5, four new fires were discovered. It was these fires which provided the seed for panic among the populace. Despite reasonable explanations as to the cause of each fire — a faulty chimney in one instance, a careless smoker in a hayloft in another — the town began to feel increasingly uneasy over the incidence of what seemed to them a rash of unexplainable fires. Fire was probably the gravest danger faced by urban dwellers in colonial New York. Primitive firefighting equipment, difficulties in obtaining an adequate water supply, and the proximity of homes all increased the danger that one fire might destroy an entire settlement. It was the very real danger from fire which raised the apprehension of New Yorkers to a fever pitch. Suspicion was cast on the city's Negroes because of a growing insolence which seemed to the white townsfolk to increase as the fires became more common. Probably the slaves were only reacting with pleasure to the consternation of the white community. Fire held little terror for nonproperty owners, and the slaves could only welcome the disruption of their monotonous, daily routine.

Feeling the pressure from the community to discover the source of the fires, the local government offered a 100 pound reward for information leading to the capture of the arsonists. When, during questioning concerning the original theft, Mary Burton stated that " she would acquaint them with what she knew relating to the goods stolen from Mr. Hogg's [the merchant] but would say nothing about the fires," the city officials jumped to the conclusion that the latter half of her statement proved that she did know something about the fires — by this time a topic of much greater concern. Under repeated questioning — alternating threats with the promise of the 100 pound reward and full pardon — Mary finally " confessed " to the existence

of a Negro plot to burn the town, murder all the white male inhabitants, divide the surviving females among the victorious slaves, and make John Hughson — the tavern owner — " King " of New York. She implicated several slaves by name.

But none of the slaves would admit to having set the fires. On the contrary, they denied Mary Burton's charges. Mary had claimed that the plan had been to set the fires at night, but most of them had occurred during daylight hours. The owners of two of the slaves involved gave sworn testimony before the supreme court of New York that the slaves had been at home during the time the fires occurred. Nonetheless, the court sentenced both slaves to death by burning at the stake. Their executions were delayed, however, to allow time for further questioning which, the judges hoped, would provide additional information about the scope of what they now considered to be a proven conspiracy. Despite constant pressure and the offer of clemency, neither slave confessed until the dramatic moment when, standing before the wood piled high for their incineration, they were overcome by fear of death.

Thus the pattern was established for what one historian has called the " crowning perversion of criminal justice in the annals of American history." Without a defense attorney, simply because no lawyer in New York was willing to defend the accused, the alleged conspirators stood little chance of convincing the high court of their innocence. Mary Burton, sensing her power in much the same way that the Parris girls in Salem came to the realization that their word alone was sufficient to convict and condemn, began a series of accusations and confusing descriptions of the conspiracy which continued for months. Once the cycle was started, it continued by its own momentum: The accused usually could only escape death by admitting their role in the plot and, in turn, making new accusations. Confession — over 70 slaves were pardoned and shipped out of the colony to the West Indies — was the only solution for the poor Negroes faced with the accusations of the convicted and admitted guilty.

As a result of trials which continued for more than a year, over 150 slaves and 25 whites were imprisoned, 18 slaves and four whites hanged, and 13 slaves burned. But time worked on the side of a return to sanity. As larger numbers of people were identified and convicted, the fear of a successful conspiracy lessened. What finally brought a halt to the proceedings was a series of accusations by Mary Burton against white citizens of New York of such prominence that the chief justice, Daniel Horsmanden, had their names removed from the record. The trials were terminated, but Horsmanden retained his credulity to the end; to deny the accuracy of Mary's confessions would

be to cast doubt on the process by which so many had lost their lives. Mary Burton claimed, and was given, the 100 pound reward — whereupon she disappeared from the province. The authorities proclaimed a day of thanksgiving for saving the community from the impending calamity of a Negro insurrection. So ended the "Negro Plot of 1741."

VII

THE SLAVE'S RESPONSE TO HIS CONDITION

THE TYPES OF RESPONSES to white power available to a slave in 18th century New York were fairly limited. Black slaves could, and perhaps to a surprising degree sometimes did, express their fundamental abhorrence of their unfree condition by committing acts of violent retribution against whites; or, more rarely, by making the ultimate protest of self-mutilation or suicide. But for the most part Negroes accepted their situation as unchangeable, and in their daily relationships with whites tried to find nonviolent means of bending regulations and customs to their own advantage. Slaves recognized that they were born into a power relationship in which they had very few significant legal powers, and, at least before the period of the American Revolution, little in the way of moral leverage. The subject of the black minority's reaction to persecution in New York is mainly the story of adaptation to what was an unalterable, or at best only slightly modifiable, environment. Their behavior is an example of the extent to which human beings are able to adjust to bizarre situations when they are left without real choice.

Depending upon where they lived, what they did, and who their masters were, some New York slaves were able to find phenomenally effective means of forcing concessions from their owners — without violence and without breaking the rules of the slave system. Most successful in this respect were the highly skilled slaves of New York City. Such artisans and craftsmen were able to obtain small concessions and advantages in working conditions to a degree probably unknown in any other colony. Masters as well as slaves apparently recognized the need for collaboration: A farmhand could be physically coerced because he lacked bargaining power, but a skilled artisan could subtly make the quality and quantity of his work suffer if he were not satisfied with his conditions. Masters often provided such petty benefits as additional clothing, liquor, or small sums of spending money. They did so because they realized that the slave's threat was not an

Advertiſements.

RUN away on Thurſday laſt from Robert Nevan, a Servant Maid named Margery Brown of a thick ſhort Stature, had on when ſhe went away, a ſpeckled Jacket, plain quilt Petticoat. Whoever brings her to her ſaid Maſter, ſhall be reaſonably rewarded, by Robert Nevan.
It is ſuppoſed ſhe may be about this City at this preſent.

TWo luſty ſtrong Negro Men, and a Negro Girl that can do all Manner of Houſe work, to be Sold by William Bradford, *jun.*

Newspaper advertisements in the New York Gazette for the week of June 12, 1732, above, and December 11, 1732, below. The first and last runaways described (Margery Brown and John Ivey) were presumably white indentured servants. The William Bradford, Jr., who offered three slaves for sale was the son of the Gazette's publisher. The original newspapers are in the New York State Library, Albany.

RAN away from *Joſeph Reade* of the City of *New-York*, Mercht. the 14th of *November* 1732. a likely Mullatto Servant Woman, named *Sarah*, ſhe is about 24 Years of Age, and has taken with her a Callico Suit of Cloaths, a ſtriped Satten Silk Waſt-coat, a ſtriped Callimmco Waſt-coat and Petty-coat, two Homeſpun Waſt-coats and Petty-coats, and a Negro Man's light colour'd Coat with braſs Buttons; ſhe is of a Tall Stature and well ſet, a handy Wench, can do all ſorts of Houſe-work, ſpeaks good Engliſh and ſome Dutch. Whoſoever takes up the ſaid Servant, and will bring her to her ſaid Maſter, ſhall have *Five Pounds* as a Reward and all reaſonable Charges paid.

RAN away from *James Wallace* of *New-York*, Mercht a Servant Man named *John Ivey*, of a middle ſtature, pretty ſlender, very ſmall Legs, and ſomething inclining to a ſtoop in his walk, pale Fac'd long dark coloured Hair curl'd when dreſs'd, commonly wears it under a Cap; aged about 30 Years born in *Bawſleple* in the Weſt of *England*, by Trade a Cooper. He had on when he went away a grey Coat trim'd with Black and Leather Breeches. Whoever ſecures ſaid Servant and brings him to his ſaid Maſter, ſhall have *Five Pounds* as a Reward, and all reaſonable Charges paid.

empty one: A highly skilled laborer, slave or free, was more likely to work carefully and efficiently, if satisfied with his situation or if promised some future reward.

The ultimate " reward " was manumission. It was not uncommon in colonial New York for a master to agree — under fairly severe pressure from a skilled slave — to terms by which the slave could earn his freedom. One method was to allow the slave to " buy " his own freedom by working nights, or hiring himself out on his " own " time. In such instances masters were usually willing to accept payment in installments over an extended period of time — a provision which made this method practicable for the slave. Sometimes skilled slaves worked to buy freedom for their family, or for dear friends. A second relatively common means by which skilled slaves could earn their freedom was through an agreement with their master which stipulated that they would be manumitted in return for a given term of faithful service. Such a contract in effect converted slavery into indentured servitude by doing away with service in perpetuity. The " contract," however, was not legally binding; since the slave was considered the master's property, the slave could not " pay " his master because everything he owned already belonged to him. Slaves were able to obtain some legal safeguard for manumission contracts by obtaining a postdated deed of emancipation.

New York may have had a larger number of highly skilled slaves than any other colony, but there were still thousands of Negroes in New York, either in urban households or on farms, who lacked the specialized abilities which would enable them to bargain successfully for better conditions. Probably most of these slaves attempted to ease their burden by accepting their degraded position in the social structure. They hoped to ameliorate their condition by doing what was expected of them. " As we depend upon our master for what we eat, and drink, and wear. . . ." a Long Island slave, Jupiter Hammon, wrote, " we cannot be happy unless we obey them. Good servants," he concluded, " frequently make good masters." A white traveler noticed that slave mothers in Albany tried to train their children to be first-rate servants:

> These negro-women piqued themselves on teaching their children to be excellent servants, well knowing servitude to be their lot for life, and that it could only be sweetened by making themselves particularly useful, and excelling in their department.

Acceptance of the institution of slavery was probably the most common response to racial discrimination.

But some slaves managed to discover subtle ways to resist slavery and to avoid work without ever seeming to challenge the authority of their owners. By feigning illness and pretending simplicity — characteristics of Negro slaves often accepted at face value by a later generation — through carelessness, neglect of livestock, deliberate destruction of tools and fences, and by planned work slowdowns, the slave was able to deny the spirit of his master's orders and strike a blow at the master himself — usually without being punished. Consider the following comment, which refers to the colonies generally, from a British visitor to America whose travels took him to New York:

> a *new Negro,* if he must be broke, either from Obstinacy, or, which I am more apt to suppose, from Greatness of Soul, will require more hard Discipline than a young Spaniel: You would really be surprised at their Perseverance; let a hundred men show how to hoe, or drive a wheelbarrow, he'll still take the one by the bottom, and the other by the wheel; and they often die before they can be conquer'd.

Such a " personality," if perfected, could become a lifetime profession.

Often resistance took a more blatant and open form. New York City Negroes in particular were known throughout the English colonies for their insolence toward whites. In the city setting, slaves were able to establish friendly contacts with other Negroes and create for themselves a social life which was usually not possible for plantation slaves. New York City slaves often broke the nightly curfew in the city — playing pranks, drinking at taverns, and sometimes getting into noisy fights. Apparently the white majority was unable or unwilling to suppress such disorders.

Theft was the most common slave offense in 18th century New York. Slaves defined " theft " as stealing from other slaves; taking from whites was just helping oneself to necessities. Such an attitude toward stealing encouraged petty thievery even among the young and the most loyal slaves. Often slaves took from whites in order to obtain goods (or the money to buy goods) which otherwise would have been beyond their reach. Some slaves, however, stole as a second profession; they obtained sufficient quantities to carry on an active, if illicit, trade with white middlemen. Witness the accusations against John Hughson in 1741, and the discovery of a cache of stolen goods near his tavern.

Some New York slaves were unwilling to continue in a condition of bondage no matter what concessions they could wring from their white masters. For them, there was always the possibility of escaping by running away. Fugitive slaves in New York included men, women, and children, but most runaways (one historian has estimated as high

as 80 percent) were men under 30 years of age. Perhaps children had not yet had sufficient experience with slavery to induce such a drastic move. Women stood little chance of survival in the forest, and could not find a way to escape by sea. Older men usually lacked the necessary physical stamina; perhaps they also counted on a degree of security in their old age after a lifetime of hard work and faithful service. For the runaway to be successful he needed a large measure of luck, determination, and ingenuity. White citizens and local authorities were generally suspicious of strange blacks; if stopped, the fugitive was liable to be caught since most localities required slaves to carry passes if traveling more than a mile or two from their master's home. Because of these and similar difficulties, slaves with light skin coloring and Caucasian features could sometimes gain freedom simply by passing as whites. For most New York slaves, however, the chances for success were slight indeed. Runaways were usually apprehended and returned to their masters.

But that did not prevent New York slaves from making the attempt in significant numbers. One possible refuge for the fugitive slave was the forest wilderness. Some runaway slaves fled into the forest in groups. There they established semipermanent wilderness camps, relying upon theft from frontier communities for provisions. Such an arrangement was undependable and extremely risky, but, especially on Long Island and in upstate New York, fugitive slaves could obtain assistance from neighboring Indian tribes. The Senecas, Onondagas, and Minisinks often harbored runaways. Despite offers of reward and diplomatic pressures applied by the colony's government, the Indians almost never returned fugitive slaves who came to them for help. How many Negroes escaped to the wilderness is difficult to determine. Some of the tribes accepted the Negroes as full-fledged members, encouraging the former slaves to intermarry with Indians and adopt the Indian way of life. Judging by the concern of New York authorities that black fugitives might incite neutral tribes to attack white communities, the number of slaves who ran to nearby Indian villages may have been fairly large.

Most runaways went for distance; they tried to escape from the province altogether. One of the more popular routes was to head north for Canada. The French in Canada were known to give asylum to English slaves, not because they were opposed to slavery (they themselves had slaves), but because they were enemies of the English. Fugitive slaves who reached Canada presented more of a problem for New Yorkers than did other runaways. Because of the danger that they could provide the French and Indians with military information, the New York assembly in 1705 imposed the death penalty on any

Negro slave discovered more than 40 miles north of Albany without a pass.

The easiest way for a runaway slave to escape from the province was not via the northern wilderness route to Canada, but through the bustling seaport of the city of New York. Probably more runaway slaves escaped by boat than by any other means. If a fugitive slave could sign on as crew on one of the outgoing ships he might work his way to safety. Some of the captains were satisfied to have an able-bodied crewman, no matter what his "legal" status. So many fugitive slaves came to the city to find passage to freedom, however, that many were unable to get ships. A busy port with a large transient population, New York provided excellent opportunities for the runaway to hide while in waiting. The unruly atmosphere and lawlessness of the waterfront added to the difficulty owners had in finding and having slaves returned. Eventually so many fugitive slaves were waiting for ships in New York that some openly formed themselves into fugitive gangs!

Acts of violence were a less common but a more dramatic evidence of the Negro's dissatisfaction with his condition. They attracted disproportionate attention from the white community both because of the actual damage to property and loss of life, and because of white fantasies about potential slave vengeance. Next to theft, arson was probably the second most common slave crime in provincial New York. The dissatisfied slave might achieve either of two ends by starting a fire. Fire could be used to conceal a theft or to create a situation in which theft was made easier; or the fire itself could stand as an act of retaliation. The extensive Albany fire of 1793, for example, was believed to have been started by slaves as reprisal against a master. Because of the danger to property, and because the white community recognized that arson was often an expression of violent antagonism toward white authority, the penalty in New York for a slave convicted of arson was death by burning at the stake.

Like arson, most acts of slave violence against whites were essentially individual acts directed against one or a few people. In colonial New York, there are recorded incidents of slaves stealing their master's gun and shooting the master and his whole family; of faithful household servants strangling entire families in their sleep; of slaves clubbing whites to death; and of slaves adding poison to the meals they served their white families. Based on such experiences, whites had good reason to fear similar behavior on the part of even the most docile of their slaves. But it is also clear that, especially with the threat of poisoning, white anxiety over the possibility of

individual acts of slave violence greatly exceeded the real potential for such reprisals.

Slaves in New York sometimes turned their own violence on themselves. From a psychological perspective, self-mutilation could mean many things — from an expression of severe depression and self-hatred, to a perverse act of vengeance on the master by damaging his property. On a purely practical level, it insured the slave a period of rest during recuperation, or at least escape from the hardest work, depending upon the nature of the self-inflicted injury. The final act of desperation — suicide — was also not unknown in 18th century New York. Knowing that torture and death awaited them if captured by the whites, slaves who had fled after committing acts of violence or participating in an organized rebellion sometimes committed suicide if capture seemed imminent and inescapable.

Rumors of insurrection and rebellion greatly outnumbered actual outbreaks of organized, planned violence. Such rumors are a better gauge of the extent of white fear than an index to slave insurrections. Reports of rebellion often were but exaggerated accounts of insolence and disobedience on the part of unruly slaves who had no intention of attempting large-scale insurrection. If we include only clearly defined rebellions for which documentation survives, there were probably only three or four attempted rebellions in New York throughout the colonial period. The conspiracy of 1741 was more a conspiracy to steal from the city's rich than a plot to overthrow the government. In Schenectady in 1761, however, 13 slaves were overheard in a tavern discussing plans to burn and loot the town. They were apprehended, of course, before they could put their plan into action. In Ulster County in 1775 about 20 slaves were arrested for plotting rebellion — again before they had actually revolted. It may have been that the Ulster County slaves were planning a mass break for Canada and freedom, rather than violence against the white community. The most successful and prolonged of the slave uprisings in colonial New York was that which occurred in 1712. The conspirators managed to keep their plans for rebellion so well guarded that they actually succeeded in storing guns and ammunition undetected in an orchard on the northern fringe of New York City. The slaves' plan was simple: They would set fire to a nearby outbuilding, and then wait in ambush until the whites came running to drown the fire. The plan was carried out perfectly; as whites arrived in answer to the alarm, the Negroes opened fire, killing five of the unsuspecting firefighters and wounding six more.

But white power in New York was so overwhelming that the Negroes could not possibly hope to continue the revolt. Realizing that

they could do no further damage, and that white reinforcements were on their way from the city, the rebellious slaves fled to the woods. Without adequate shelter or food, the rebels faced starvation. Some of the fugitives surrendered themselves to the authorities, but the leaders — aware of the type of punishment which was in store for them — committed suicide. Twenty-one slaves were convicted and sentenced to death for insurrection and murder. The judges purposely concocted barbarous methods for the executions so that the rebels' deaths would serve as a warning to other Negroes who might harbor similar plans. For the most part, this and other such lessons were not lost on the slaves of New York. Negro slaves eschewed violence and attempted to deal with their minority status through more sophisticated means.

42

VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

THE RESULTS OF THE American Revolution were not all beneficial for Negroes, but the logic of revolutionary thought did produce an intellectual climate in New York which greatly aided the growth of antislavery feeling in the State, and the circumstances of the military war against the mother country forced the white majority to offer freedom to large numbers of Negro slaves in return for service in the American army. The natural rights philosophy — the rationale for the American rebellion against England so cogently expressed by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence — was a potent force working in the slaves' behalf. At the convention called in 1777 to write a constitution for the new state there was general agreement about the need to abolish chattel slavery; once begun, the antislavery momentum did not run out until slavery was abolished in the State of New York.

Antislavery first became a live political issue in New York in the 1760's when the colony joined the chorus of opposition to the British regulatory acts which many felt were unfair and unjust. American patriots were unwilling to remain quiet when confronted by what they considered to be tyrannical actions on the part of the English government. As the historian Bernard Bailyn has recently shown, American Whigs viewed the issue as a conspiracy in which a small group of Englishmen were actively attempting to deny Americans their liberties and make " slaves " of them. Patriot propagandists rallied around groups like the Sons of Liberty, calling for men to resist infringements of their rights in order to prevent " Americans " from being enslaved.

It became clear to many New Yorkers as they heard themselves and others talk about the natural rights of all men — rights people acquired not through legal status or social position, but simply by being born — and about the need to resist unfair enactments of a governing body in which they were not represented, that an analogy

could be drawn between their own situation and that of the American Negro. Loyalists, the opposition in England, and the patriots themselves noted the inconsistency of arguments which called for action to avoid the horror of slavery by spokesmen who held thousands of Negroes as slaves. Patriots spoke of the dangers of being enslaved by the British at the same time that white Americans held black Americans as slaves. Because they believed in the natural rights philosophy and in the danger of enslavement from England to a degree sufficient to support a war for independence, the analogy between their own situation and that of the American Negro was an especially persuasive one.

Neither slaves nor masters in New York were immune to the influence of the new ideas. One result of the intellectual ferment of the revolutionary years was that slaves were more likely to obtain the concessions they demanded from their masters. After 1774, owners often had to make concessions in order to obtain satisfactory service. In some instances slaves with especially valuable skills were able to veto their own sale by stating that they would not work for the prospective buyer, and skilled slaves in general were more successful than before the Revolution in obtaining contractual agreements from their owners promising freedom in return for a stipulated period of faithful service. In part, this was because large numbers of whites who owned slaves were more sensitive to antislavery thought and more responsive to the abolition appeal. Recognizing the inconsistency in owning slaves at the same time they were sacrificing for the natural rights of mankind, their conscience prodded them to give in to black demands when made.

Slaves, too, were influenced by the pervasive call for liberty and the rhetoric of the revolutionary fight for freedom. That does not mean that large numbers of slaves joined in the fight against England out of concern for the American cause. On the contrary, most New York slaves remained aloof from the struggle. Without property or a stake in a stable society, they had little sympathy for a battle to protect property rights and to preserve the right of no taxation without representation. The effect of the revolutionary rhetoric on slaves was simply to increase their demands for concessions — and for manumission. Statistics on manumissions in New York show a significant increase after the beginning of the war.

Military considerations proved to be even more effective than ideology in undermining the institution of slavery in New York. Military campaigns, British occupation of parts of the State, including New York City, and the consequent breakdown in authority all created opportunities — both legal and extra-legal — for slaves to gain

their freedom. And in New York, Negroes took advantage of the situation by the thousands.

At first, the official British position was to treat the slaves as neutrals, but in 1779, Sir Henry Clinton, then commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, directed that all slaves who sought asylum with the English be granted their freedom. His purpose was not humanitarian, since the English themselves were still slaveholders; he hoped to recruit Negroes as laborers who could take over construction and maintenance work which otherwise would have to be done by British regulars. For the New York slave, the new policy meant that the opportunity to run away and the chance for success were enormously increased. Hundreds joined the labor battalions with Burgoyne's army during the Saratoga campaign; New York City, occupied by the British for 7 years during the war, became a mecca for fleeing New York slaves. Most of the former slaves who made it to the British zone were hired as paid laborers on military works in and around the port city; but some Negroes were allowed to join loyalist fighting units under British control. The number of fugitive slaves increased so drastically that the New York patriots created a special Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies not only to suppress Tory activity, but also to track down and prevent Negro runaways from reaching the British lines. The British and the Tories also worked to disrupt the American war effort by inciting the slaves to rebel. The threat of slave insurrection required the use of New York militia which otherwise might have been directed against the British. The danger was especially great in the Albany-Schenectady area.

Because of the large number of runaways, the threat of slave insurrection, and the pressing need for more soldiers in the American army, New York authorities were forced to make concessions to the slave population in an attempt to win their support in the war. New York, like others of the former colonies, initiated a policy of encouraging slave enlistments in the militia. In 1781, a law was passed which promised freedom to any New York slave in return for 3 years military service in the American army. The slave, of course, could not make the decision to enlist for himself since he remained the property of his owner. To encourage masters to enlist their slaves, the law provided a bounty to owners of 500 acres of public land for every slave entered.

Property is never as secure in wartime as it is in peace, and (as property) some slaves gained their freedom from the changing fortunes of the military campaigns in New York. When wealthy patriots were forced to leave their homes in flight from the British, for

example, they often left all their possessions — including their slaves. These slaves became free *de facto* — they simply merged with the free Negro population in New York, or, like many loyalists, they joined the British and were evacuated with them after the war. On the other hand, loyalists often had their property, including slaves, confiscated by local ordinance. And, in 1784 the New York Legislature enacted a bill which made loyalist property forfeit, and freed the slaves belonging to loyalists.

Because thousands of New York slaves escaped to the British or earned their freedom fighting for the patriot side, because of increased manumissions, and, in part, because of increased immigration into New York of free whites, the percentage of slaves in New York declined markedly during the period of the American Revolution. In the 15 years from 1771 to 1786, the white population in the State grew by about 47 percent while the Negro population declined by roughly 5 percent. The ratio of slaves to whites in New York decreased from one in seven to one in 12. The following table illustrates this transformation:

Year	*White Pop.*	*Slave Pop.*	*% of Pop. slave*
1771	148,124	19,883	11.8
1786	219,996	18,889	7.9

One result of the increase of free laborers and the decline in the number of slaves was a decline in the cost of hiring free labor to the point where free workers could compete successfully with slave laborers. Thus another significant effect of the Revolution in New York was to remove the economic benefits of slavery as a labor institution. The antislavery movement in New York, then, reflected three principal developments of the era of the American Revolution: The influence of the natural rights philosophy, the realities of war-induced changes, and the demographic and economic transformations of the war years.

But abolition itself required legal enactment, and the struggle for total manumission was complicated by the conflict between the antislavery impulse produced by the Revolution and the conservative reaction which followed it. While recognizing the need for legislation, the New York constitutional convention put off facing the problem of freeing the slaves until after the war. An abolition bill was introduced in the 1785 session of the State Legislature, but despite clear majorities in both houses in favor of emancipation, the Legislature was unable to agree on the provisions of the law. A bill to free all children born to slave women in New York after 1785 passed

the House, but with riders denying the Negro suffrage, prohibiting Negroes from holding public office, denying Negroes the right to testify in court against whites, and prohibiting interracial marriages. The State Senate passed the same bill, but removed all the amendments except that denying the Negro the right to vote. After considerable legislative manipulation, the bill finally failed because a majority of the legislators feared the prospect of Negro suffrage more than they favored the abolition of slavery.

It was not until 1799 that the Legislature approved a gradual emancipation bill — and then the antislavery majority was successful only because they kept the question of the Negro's civil status distinct from the question of emancipation. The 1799 bill provided that all male children born to slave women *after* July 4, 1799, were to be freed at age 28, and female children at age 25. Those slaves born before July 4, 1799, who had been ignored by the 1799 law, were not freed until a second emancipation act was passed in 1817. Slaves could still be brought into the State by outsiders, but after 1817 no New Yorker could own a slave.

IX

THE CONSERVATIVE REACTION

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION MARKED a turning point in white attitudes toward Negroes and toward slavery. Certainly Negro slaves in New York — all blacks, for that matter — benefitted from " the irreversible commitment of the new nation to the principles of liberty and equality," principles which insured the eventual abolition of the slave system in the State. In one sense the American Revolution was revolutionary in that it made New Yorkers realize that Negroes were slaves in America *because* of the white assessment of black people. Strange as it may seem to us today, before the 1760's it was rare for Americans to use the term " prejudice " in connection with Negroes or with slavery. It was not until the nature of the problem was recognized that the process of solving it could begin.

But success in finding a permanent, mutually acceptable solution to the race problem in New York proved to be illusive. Despite the lack of support for slavery as a system, the decline in the slave's economic utility, and legal abolition, the position of the Negro did not improve markedly after the Revolution; because of racial prejudice in New York little was done to help the former slaves earn an equal place in the community with other freemen. The definition of " freedom " was so narrow that it included only the legal abolition of chattel slavery, and did nothing to insure the civil rights of the Negro minority. Prejudice, discrimination, and the Negro's inferior status were not eliminated. Slavery, it seemed to New Yorkers, was clearly wrong; but it was not obvious to 18th century people that their responsibility toward the Negro extended beyond abolition to include education, open housing, the right to work, and a guarantee of those rights which would enable Negroes to become productive members of society on an equal footing with the white community.

Within a generation after the Revolution a conservative reaction had set in — a reaction common to most of the new states in the Union. The struggle for inalienable rights had become not something

which Americans had lived through and fought for, but a vicarious experience belonging to an earlier time. The passing years brought a diminution in the power of the ideas of the Declaration of Independence. By the first decades of the 19th century the Negro was generally considered to be somehow separate from America: He was thought to be inferior, to be *different,* not really an American. Neither slavery nor the Negro fitted into the vision most New Yorkers held of the grand experiment in republicanism they believed they were beginning. The golden opportunity of the Revolutionary period was allowed to pass away; we are still feeling the repercussions of the conservative reaction today.

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